

REMARKS

Entry of the foregoing and reconsideration of the application identified in caption, as amended, pursuant to and consistent with 37 C.F.R. §1.111 and in light of the remarks which follow, are respectfully requested.

At the outset, Applicants note with appreciation the indication that claim 25 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the features of the base claim and any intervening claims (Official Action at page 23).

By the above amendments, claims 1, 6, 8-23 and 25-29 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Thus, claims 24 and 30-45 are currently pending in the present application. Independent claims 24, 43 and 45 have been amended by incorporating the subject matter of now canceled claim 25, which has been indicated as containing allowable subject matter.

In the Official Action, claims 1, 6, 9-13, 15-21, 24, 26-29, 31-35, 37-40, 43 and 45 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over U.S. Patent No. 5,751,388 (*Larson*) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,149,837 (*Sekine et al*). Claims 8 and 30 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over *Larson* in view of *Sekine et al*, and further in view of an abstract of Japanese Patent Document No. 56057850. Claim 14 and 36 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over *Larson* in view of *Sekine et al*, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,685,771 (*West et al*). Claims 18 and 44 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over *Larson* in view of *Sekine et al*, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,772,885 (*Uehara et al*). Claims 22 and 23 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over *Larson* in view of *Sekine et al*, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,672,296 (*Shen et al*).

As discussed above, claims 1, 6, 8-23 and 25-29 have been canceled, and independent claims 24, 43 and 45 have been amended by incorporating the subject matter of now canceled claim 25. Claim 25 was indicated by the Examiner as containing allowable subject matter. Accordingly, for at least the above reasons, withdrawal of the above rejections is respectfully requested.

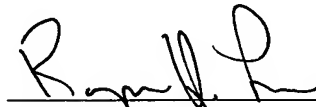
From the foregoing, further and favorable action in the form of a Notice of Allowance is believed to be next in order, and such action is earnestly solicited. If there are any questions concerning this paper or the application in general, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

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